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STRIKES AND ARBITRATION.

THE prospect for the future of the laboring man in America is brighter to-day than it ever was, notwithstanding the seemingly "strained relations" at present existing between employer and employee.

That we are passing through an epidemic of strikes, lockouts and boycotts is true, but the fact must not be lost sight of, that were it not for the growing power of organization we should have a great many more strikes to contend with than we have had for the first three months of the present year.

The growth of organization for the past ten years has been steady and healthy. It is only where organization is in its infancy that serious troubles such as strikes and lockouts exist. The causes from which strikes and lockouts spring are to be found in all parts of the country, but the methods of dealing with the troubles as they arise are different. In places where no organizations of labor exist, or where the seeds of organization have just been planted, disputing parties are apt to become involved in strikes. The reasons advanced in support of that proposition are as follows: until recently very few workingmen dared to express their opinion in public on the subject of labor, for the reason that they were almost certain of an immediate dismissal from the service of the man or company they worked for, if it became known that they in any way favored the association of workingmen for mutual protection. With such a sentiment existing in the breasts of workingmen they could not be expected to feel very kindly toward the employer who so jealously watched their every movement, and who, by his actions, made them feel that they were regarded rather as serfs than freemen. While the real bone and sinew of the land remained in enforced silence, except where it could be heard through the medium of the press and rostrum through chosen leaders, another class of men who seldom worked would

insist on "representing labor," and in making glowing speeches on the rights and wrongs of man would urge the "abolition of property," or the "equal division of wealth;" such speakers very often suggesting that a good thing to do would be to "hang capitalists to lamp-posts." The employer of labor who listened to such speeches felt that in suppressing organization among his workmen he was performing a laudable act. Yet he was by that means proving himself to be the most powerful ally the anarchist could wish for. He caused his employees to feel that he took no interest in them other than to get as many hours of toil out of them for as few shillings as possible. The consequence was that the employer, who was himself responsible for the smothering of the honest expression of opinion on the part of labor, became possessed of the idea that the raw head and bloody bones curb-stone orator was the real representative of labor, and determined to exercise more vigilance and precaution than ever in keeping his "help" out of the labor society. The speaker who hinted at or advocated the destruction of property or the hanging of capitalists to lamp-posts, was shrewd enough to speak very kindly, and in a knowing manner, of labor associations, giving out the impression that he held membership in one or more of them. Workingmen who were denied the right to organize, very frequently went to hear Mr. Scientific lecture on the best means of handling dynamite. And when the speaker portrayed the wrongs of labor, the thoughtful workman could readily trace a resemblance between the employer painted by the lecturer and the man he himself worked for. Workmen employed by those who frowned on labor organizations became sullen and morose; they saw in every action of the Superintendent another innovation on their rights, and they finally determined to throw off the yoke of oppression, organize and assert their manhood. The actions of the superintendent, or boss, very often tended to widen the breach between employer and employee. When the organization did come it found a very bitter feeling existing on both sides, and before studying the laws of the society they joined, or becoming conversant with its rules or regulations regarding the settlement of disputes or grievances, the workmen determined to wipe out of existence the whole system of petty tyrannies that had been practiced on them for years. Not being drilled in organization, and feeling that the employer would not treat with them, the only remedy suggesting itself was the

strike. And, on the other hand, the employer who felt that every move of his workmen in organization would be directed against his interests, determined to take time by the forelock and turn them all out on the street. Thus we find the organization in its infancy face to face with a strike or lockout.

This condition of affairs existed in a great many places throughout the United States in the beginning of the present year. Absorbed in the task of getting large dividends, the employer seldom inquired of his superintendent how he managed the business intrusted to his keeping, or how he treated the employees. In thousands of places throughout the United States, as many superintendents, foremen, or petty bosses are interested in stores, corner groceries or saloons. In many places the employee is told plainly that he must deal at the store, or get his liquor from the saloon in which his boss has an interest; in others he is given to understand that he must deal in these stores or saloons, or forfeit his situation. Laws have been passed in some States against the keeping of company stores, but the stores are kept nevertheless, and workmen are made to feel that they must patronize them.

In many cases the owners of mills, factories or mines are not aware of the existence of such institutions as the "pluck me"—the name applied to the company store—but they stand so far away from their employees that they cannot hear the murmur of complaint, and if a whisper of it ever does reach their ears it comes through the boss who is not only interested in the store, but in keeping its existence a secret from his employer. The keeping of such stores is another source of injustice to workmen, for their existence tends to widen the breach between employer and employee. It may seem that I am dealing with insignificant things in this paper, but when the statement is made, that seven out of every ten superintendents or bosses are interested in the management, and derive profits from the operation, of stores which employees are forced to patronize, I make an assertion which can be proved. In a country where every man, no matter how humble, is taught from his infancy that he stands the equal of all other men, it is but natural for a citizen who is given to understand that he must patronize a certain store, or that he cannot join a certain society, to feel restive and, where so much is promised and so little obtained, men are apt to lose faith in a law-making system which obliges the workman him-

self to become complainant and prosecutor in cases where the laws are violated to his detriment. If he prosecutes, he is discharged. If he does not prosecute for infractions of law but simply complains, he is told to invoke the majesty of the law in his own behalf. In this way law is disregarded ; it becomes a dead letter ; men lose hope in law and law-makers.

The constant itching and irritation caused by the indifference of the employer to their welfare, and the injustices practiced on them by petty bosses, go on until the men feel that the only remedy is through the strike. In this way men who belong to no organization are launched into strikes.

Workingmen are not, as a rule, educated men. When the strike does come, while they feel that they have been wronged, yet they are lacking in the command of language necessary to state their case properly to the world, and, hence, set forth their claims in such a way as to arouse prejudices or create false impressions. The other side having the advantage of education, either personally or by right of purchase, can and does mold public opinion in a great many cases.

I have pointed out one or two of the little things which cause a great deal of uneasiness and vexation to workingmen ; others have pointed out the root of the evil. The workingman of the United States will soon realize that he possesses the power which kings once held—that he has the right to manage his own affairs. The power of the king has passed away. The power of wealth is passing away. The evening shadows are closing in upon the day when immense private fortunes can be acquired. The new power dawning upon the world is that of the workingman to rule his own destinies. That power can no longer be kept from him. How will he wield it ?

This question is of great concern not only to the workingman but to every citizen of the republic, and the hand of every citizen who loves his country should be extended to assist the new ruler. I have no fears because of the present apparently disturbed condition of the labor world ; on the contrary, the signs are very hopeful. Wendell Phillips once said, “Never look for an age when the people can be quiet and safe. At such times Despotism like a shrouding mist steals over the mirror of Freedom.”

The people are not quiet to-day, but they are safe. It is the power of monopoly that is not safe. The men who pile up large

fortunes must compensate for that privilege in the payment of a graduated income tax. The blessings which they derive from wealth must be shared by the nation from which they extract that wealth.

The hours of labor must be reduced throughout the nation, so that the toilers may have more time in which to learn the science of self government. Labor-saving machinery instead of making a slave of man must become his servant. How will the workingman wield his power? Organized labor says the power will be wisely handled, but we must have the co-operation of the vast middle classes. The employer and employed must no longer stand apart. The barriers of pride, caste, greed, hatred and bitterness must be torn down. The workingman and his employer must meet face to face, they must discuss every detail in the management of the concerns they are jointly operating. No sacrifice of principle on the one hand or of manhood on the other need attend such a transaction. In the management of great or small concerns each grievance, each trouble or difference, whether in relation to discipline or wages, should be talked over in a conciliatory spirit and *arbitrated*. Joint boards of arbitration should be formed between manufacturer, and workmen all over the country. Each party should devote considerable time to the perfecting of the plans best suited to their interests or surroundings, for rules governing one case or locality might not work well in another.

Having after careful deliberation agreed upon the rules, each party should sign the articles of agreement, binding itself to abide by them until changed by consent of both. Agreements of this kind will be the means of settling differences as they arise, and with their inauguration, strikes, lockouts, and boycotts will not be entered upon so readily, and, if ever called into play, then only as the very last resort.

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